SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE: I have asked for a comparison between diesel and steam. I am not comparing it with electric traction. That I know. I have mentioned in the past also elsewhere for instance...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Let the Minister answer. He has not finished.

SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA: We do consider that the operations would be far more efficient if we convert steam into electric and diesel and phase out the steam locomotives as soon as possible because there are all sorts of maintenance problems and other problems which arise which end up in a much higher cost of running the steam locomotive fleet.

Foreign Airlines operating through Calcutta

*206. SHRI SUKOMAL SEN: Will the Minister of TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) what is the number of foreign airlines operating through Calcutta airport;

(b) what are the flights of Air India operating through Calcutta and their destinations;

(c) whether Government have entered into any agreement with any more foreign airlines for their operation though Calcutta; and

(d) if so, what are the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER): (a) to (d) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) Six foreign airlines namely, Aeroflot, Thai Airways, Bangladesh Biman, Royal Nepal Airlines, Druk Air (Bhutan) and Burma Airways are operating to/through Calcutta airport.

(b) Details of operations of Air India flights to/from/through Calcutta.

Sl. No.	Flight Number	Route
1	AI-316/Tuesday/Wednesday	Bombay/Calcutta/Bangkok/Hongkong/Tokyo.
2	AI-307/Wednesday/Thursday	Tokyo/Osaka/Hongkong/Bangkok/Calcutta/Bombay.
3	AI-132/Monday	London/Rome/Delhi/Bombay/Calcutta.
4	AI-193/Tuesday	Calcutta/Bombay/Dubai/London/New York.
5	AI-109/Thursday/Friday	Calcutta/Bombay/Dubai/London/New York.
6	AI-164/Wednesday/Thursday	Paris/Frankfurt/Delhi/Bombay/Calcutta.

(c) and (d) BALKAN (Bulgarian Airlines), LOT (Polish Airlines) and Singapore Airlines have been given rights to operate to Calcutta in the recent past.

SHRI SUKOMAL SEN: This question had been discussed earlier also. Sir, not only the people of Eastern India but people from other parts also feel that Calcutta airport is very much neglected and that is being neglected wilfully. For example, I would quote from Hindustan Times Delhi edition of 23rd August where it says: General Manager, International Air-

port Authority of India narrates a different story altogether. According to him, the growth rate of international air passengers in Calcutta airport in April 1985 compared to that of April 1984 was the highest in the country. It was 13 per cent while in Bombay it was 2.6 per cent and Delhi 5 per cent odd. In comparison to this, Calcutta had the highest traffic. Then the General Manager says: During the past two years, Calcutta recorded the highest growth rate of international passengers. His estimate was that international passenger traffic through Calcutta will rise further.

In view of the statement by the General Manager of International Airports Authority of India, published in Hindustan Times, Calcutta airport is wilfully neglected. In the statement made it appears that even Air India is neglecting Calcutta airport. I would like to know from the hon. Minister apart from other airlines, whether he wishes to introduce some more Air India flights to West and Gulf countries in the East.

SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER: The number of flights that Air India operates through Calcutta is sufficient and it is wrong to say that we are neglecting Calcutta airport. I do not know from where the hon. Member got the information that he has. I can give you some details. In Calcutta, in 1982-83, the number of passengers who travelled, was 15,06,505. In 1983-84 the number was 16,52,693. In 1984-85 the number was 18,58,923. Now, there are certain reasons why Calcutta is not being used by many other airlines. There is the economic condition of the State of West Bengal and also industrial decline. The hon. Member must know this also that with regard to number of people who are going to Gulf, practically there is hardly any traffic from West Bengal. Another very important point is that we have got the latest aircraft which can fly directly, for example from Frankfurt to Hong Kong. Earlier, they used to have aircraft which had to have a refuelling centre at Calcutta. What can we do if latest aircraft have come in today? And you will be surprised—I am going a little out of the question—that facilities provided for the International Airport Authority as well as to the Indian Airlines as also the navigational facilities that we have provided for Calcutta, are more than enough to see that present requirement is met. We are doing everything possible under the sun to see that Calcutta airport is used. Even out of 19 airlines which have got contract with our country to fly and use Calcutta airport, only five are flying and the rest do not. We can force them to put a clause to use Calcutta airport but we cannot force them on operational basis.

SHRI SUKOMAL SEN: The answer says that BALKAN, LOT and Singapore Airlines have been given rights to operate to Calcutta. But still it is not a sufficient operation. Last year also, his predecessor wrote to me that airlines are going to operate but still they are not operating. What is the reason for it and what is delaying the operations? I would also like to know from the hon. Minister as to which other airlines have been offered to operate through Calcutta

SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER: A statement has already been made that 19 airlines have been allowed. The countries which have been allowed to operate through Calcutta are, Lebanese, Netherlands, Iraq, Australia, USA, Poland, U. K, Canada, Scandinavian countries, Ghana, Nigeria, Philippines, Burma, Aeroflot, Thai Airways, Bangladesh Biman, Royal Nepal Airlines and out of that only five are operating, that is, Druk Air, Royal Nepal Airlines, Bangladesh Biman, Thai Airways and Aeroflot. We are also having negotiations with one or two more countries and one of the conditions which we are trying to put is that they should touch Calcutta...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over.